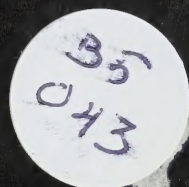


SRI LANKA



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Martin Luther King, Arch Bishop
Desmond Tutu, like I too work
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from my home village from 1985 driven out
Speakers:

by Sri Lankan Troops. **Adrian Wijemanne**

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Foreword

A Paradise gone sour !

Sri Lanka (known by the unfussy name of Ceylon until 1972) started life as a self-governing country in 1948 with many advantages. Richly endowed by Nature, with an immense tourism potential, there was in addition the exchange-earning colonial patrimony in the form of Tea. With a healthy economy and a high literacy rate, and a people initiated into adult franchise as early as 1931, the island at the time of independence presented the picture of a peaceful, vibrant, model democracy. Today, almost fifty years later, that picture has been reduced to a mocking caricature. **What has gone wrong ?**

The brand of democracy practised in Sri Lanka has long become suspect, governments have been functioning under Emergency Rule, and Peace, along with decency in public life, have become scarce commodities. The country is now conditioned to lead the life of a beggar nation dependent on Western bounty, with a hand constantly outstretched towards Paris, Tokyo and Washington, while at the same time fighting an expensive war against what she claims are her own nationals, and bombing and shelling parts of the country which she claims are her own.

In a country that earned its independence after 450 years of colonial rule without a shot being fired, the one dominating factor today is THE GUN. No wars between nations have lasted this long as this internal war in this little island, and at no time in its colonial history have such hundreds and thousands of human lives been taken, or human depravity sunk to such depths. Not only is rape

used as a weapon of war, but also, even outside the war zone in the south, murder, rape, incest and child abuse have become endemic.

Let's look at the beginnings of self-rule. Ceylon came to be independent through what amounted to a "horse deal" between the British Colonial Office and an elite Sinhala caucus led by Don Stephen Senanayake, which naturally took into account only the British and Sinhala interests. The Tamils who dominated political life in the country for more than four decades until the 1920s were nowhere in the picture when it came to a transfer of power. And therein lay the seeds of the ethnic divide that was to follow, and which alone has brought the country to the present pass. Once the numerically preponderant Sinhala majority had taken control of the levers of power, it would have been idle to expect them to share power willingly with an ethnic minority. But what was inexcusable was the fact that Sinhala leaders fed that belief, the Tamils took them on trust, and the Sinhalese time and again betrayed that trust.

Urging the minorities in 1945 to accept the Soulbury Constitution D.S.Senanayake gave this solemn assurance: "On behalf of the Congress (the Ceylon National Congress) and on my own behalf I give the minority communities **THE SINCERE ASSURANCE** that no harm need they fear at our hands in a free Lanka". Appealing specifically to the Tamils, he made this peroration: "Do you want to be governed from London or do you want, as Ceylonese, to help govern Ceylon?" ¹ **Once he became Prime Minister of "free Lanka" D.S.Senanayake's first legislative acts were to deprive one million plantation Tamils of their citizenship and their voting rights !** That was not the first example of Sinhala diddling, nor was it to be the last. It has been going on for the near fifty years of "independence", and currently it has taken the name "Peace through War".

British correspondent Walter Schwarz wrote more than

twenty years ago: "Looking back, the Tamils also feel that it was "a pity" to have left so much on trust and many have now come to share the view of the United Front leader, Mr.S.J.V. Chelvanayakam who told the present writer early in 1975: "Our fundamental mistake was not to ask for independence when the British left".² If the hour did not produce a Tamil Jinnah, it was because Eelam Tamil nationalism as a concept was not even born. There were several reasons for it. Beginning with the last quarter of the 19th century until late into the 1920s the Sinhalese themselves were content to be led by Tamil political giants of the calibre of Sir Muttu Coomaraswamy, Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan and Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam. Ethnicity was never a divisive factor, and Tamil leadership was luxuriating in the Colombo-centred elite politics of the time. Tamils, who as a people have a weakness for living in the past, saw too late a different kind of future that was catching up with the past. Their emotional dependence on India for cultural and religious nourishment also inhibited the birth of an independent Eelam Tamil nationalism. **If the Tamils helped the Sinhalese get THEIR independence on a silver salver fifty years ago, the Tamils today have to wage a bloody 15-year armed struggle to wrest theirs.** That is the Tamil tragedy. That is also a 50-year indictment on the Sinhala people and those who have wielded power on their behalf these fifty years.

Why this should have happened to a country eulogised once as Emerald Isle, Paradise Isle, the land of Serendipity, the Garden of Eden and God's chosen country remains a complex and tragic story. Bishop Heber's supposed reference to Ceylon: "...Where every prospect pleases, but only Man is vile", looked a sweeping indictment, but it is to his credit that he said it long before the Tamils saw the island's Homo Sapiens in that light. Tragic as the story of Sri Lanka is, when one thinks of the island where one was born and bred, lived and hoped, and then despaired and left; what comes to mind is a comic limerick by the poet-singer Bob Dylan :

“God’s plan made a hopeful beginning

But Man spoilt his chances by sinning

*We trust the story
will end in God’s glory*

But at present the other side’s winning.”

S.Sivanayagam

June 1997.

-
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8 November 1945.*
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DISCRIMINATION IN EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA IN THE LAST 50 YEARS

Professor C J Eliezer

I. INTRODUCTION

Ceylon was my home for the first 40 years of my life from 1918 to 1959. During the final decade of these years, I was Professor of Mathematics and for a period Dean of Science at the University of Ceylon. I was one of the lucky ones of my generation of Ceylonese. I was taught by, and moved with, some outstanding academic liberals in Ceylon, Cambridge, Princeton and Chicago.

It was a time of vision. Advances in science and technology were transforming the world, especially Third World countries. One was filled with hope that Ceylon, when it attained Independence in 1948, would follow the way of development and advance in leaps and bounds. Certainly scientists and engineers got into this mindset. But political problems that emerged arrested any development.

II. HISTORY TEACHING

At our regular Student Christian Movement meetings, people from various ethnic backgrounds were expressing alarm about threats to national unity. After one meeting, Rev. Celestine Fernando took me aside and suggested I read some of the horrible things Sinhala language newspapers were saying about us Tamils. I was surprised by the tone of hatred and deliberate inaccuracies in the reports. The logical step was to ask what did schools teach on these matters?

I had imagined most educators would have concurred with Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, that Cambridge educated friend of all communities and later curator of the Boston Museum (USA), who often quoted from a German work: (Ref 1)

"Human culture is a unitary whole, and its separate cultures are the dialects of one and the same language of the spirit."

However, a new emphasis of Sinhalese Buddhist history encouraged racial superiority and a hatred for the non-Buddhist. This view came from the Pali Chronicle, *The Mahawansa*, discovered by English civil servant George Turnour in a Buddhist monastery near Tangalle (in the south of Ceylon) in 1826. The book is believed to have been written by Buddhist monks about 600 A.D. and permeated by a strong religious bias. Some of the events it described were several centuries old. The book is a mixture of legend and history. It encouraged racial superiority and hatred of the non-Buddhist. (Ref 2)

Written history alone is insufficient for us to grasp the total elements in the life of a multiracial society. It has to be supplemented and corroborated by other sources such as oral traditions, epigraphy, inscriptions and archaeology. (Ref 3).

In a paper read at a conference on the teaching of history (1957), Mr. K. Nesiah, a lecturer in education, said: (Ref 4)

"To represent history as mainly the story of war and conflict, or even as a series of political events, not merely makes history a divisive force but may be a gross distortion. It becomes fateful when unscientific racial groupings - eg. 'Aryans' and 'Dravidians' - are imported into the story. For example, to elevate the spells of fighting

between military adventurers and their small armies in the early days of pioneering and colonisation in Ceylon into racial and national wars and to give disproportionate place in history books to these is both bad education and bad history. On the other hand, giving due place to progress in social and cultural history makes a truer tale of human relationships as essentially one of peace and cooperation. Naturally emphasis on the cultural contribution of different groups will tend to bring them together today.”

Sadly, the education provided in Ceylon did not follow this emphasis. It ignored the history and historical contributions of the people in the North and East. It did not promote racial harmony and understanding. It made it difficult for two nations who had lived as neighbours for centuries to evolve into one nation.

[I expressed my concerns in my Prize Day address at Trinity College, Kandy. Many in the audience afterwards congratulated me. I particularly remember Mr. Aluwihare, the much respected Sinhalese Inspector General of Police, warmly shook my hand and commented I had made an important analysis.]

[Some of the next day's newspapers gave a positive coverage. I remember one reporter commending my historical theme to his readers. However, before I could follow it up, the anti-Tamil pogroms of 1958 - when armed Sinhalese hoodlums attacked Tamil homes and persons - flared up. A year later I left the country for what I thought was a two-year assignment in Malaya. I was not to know I would never return except on occasional visits, as things continually worsened in Ceylon.]

In 1969, Prof. Sarathchandra of the University of Ceylon led a delegation of eminent educators at a meeting with the

Minister of Education to ask for a curriculum review to eradicate the inconsistencies, bias and lack of balance of history taught in schools. Nothing seemed to come out of it. In 1982, Mr. Nesiah again urged: (Ref 5)

[*“an inquiry, not less urgent into the books, especially the history text books, in use in schools. If the people of this country have to learn to live together in peace (whatever be the political settlement), the growing children should be freed from the prejudiced misinformation about their fellows in other parts of the country which books (and newspapers) are seeking to give. We would do well to enter into the mutual revision of history books which started with the call of Anatole France at the end of World War 1, ‘Burn the books which teach hatred, burn them all’.”*]

A disturbing trend is the continuation of intolerance towards any historical analysis that differed from the official version. Recently, a historian, Dr. Jane Russell, was arrested in Colombo and deported. Apparently, the results of her researches on ancient Sri Lankan history had not suited the powers that be.

III. MEDIUM AT UNIVERSITY

After the Sinhala Only bill was passed in 1956, I got involved in the question of the medium of instruction at the University. The Minister of Education, Mr. W. Dahanayake, sent a letter to the Vice Chancellor, Sir Nicholas Attygalle, that basically asked what the University proposed to do in the wake of the Bill.

The Vice-Chancellor consulted the University Senate, which passed on the letter to the different Faculties and Departments. After some months of discussion, the reports from the Faculties were sent to the Senate.

A few days before the Senate meeting to discuss these reports, I was in the Registrar's office when Father Peter Pillai, a Roman Catholic educator and also a member of the Senate, came in. He asked what was being done at the meeting. I replied that the Faculties' reports were up before the Senate, and these would be discussed then.

He said, "My dear fellow, you do not leave things like that. You should all get together and prepare some resolutions beforehand."

While we were talking, another Senate member, Prof. B.L.T. de Silva, came in. We asked him what he thought about the idea of resolutions. He thought it a good idea. So we started drafting some resolutions which would summarise the consensus view of all the Faculties. We decided to meet again. After that second meeting, at which a few others were also present, we finalised five resolutions. The meeting requested me to propose these at the Senate, and Mr. Julius De Lanerolle, of the Sinhalese Dictionary Project, agreed to second them.

Briefly, the resolutions aimed to ask the University to make various preparations: that in two years' time, students taught in Sinhala and Tamil mediums will be sitting the University Entrance, and there was need to have Entrance examinations in Sinhala, Tamil and English.

Noting that as English would have been studied as a second language, English should continue as a medium of instruction at University with progressive change to Sinhala and Tamil, as and when Departments report feasibility. The University would be assisted to improve their capacity in Sinhala and Tamil and prepare books, and staff and students be assisted to have a working knowledge of the official language.

The resolutions were discussed in Senate, and approved with something like unanimity. So it was a shock when it went to Council. Mr. H.V Perera, QC, started off: "**The Senate, and Prof. Eliezer, seem to have misunderstood the position.**"

He was among those hoping that English be continued indefinitely. But if a change had to be made, it had to be Sinhala only. Tamil did not come into it. The Chancellor, Mr. Dudley Senanayake and Mr. N.S. Weerasooria, QC and others supported the view that Tamil should not be a medium at University.

At one stage I asked, "What about students who come up through the Tamil medium?" There was no response.

[Senator A.M.A. Azeez, an educator at a Muslim college who was sitting next to me, reminded me that when the Prime Minister (Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike) introduced the Sinhala Only bill in Parliament, he had emphasised that it would only apply to the administration of Ceylon and not to education. Senator Azeez asked me to mention this to Council. I did so, adding that this meant that Sinhala and Tamil would become dual mediums at the University. Justice Keuneman agreed with this view. After some discussion, it was decided that the Prime Minister be asked if the Government's policy synchronised with my understanding of the matter.]

The resultant meeting, initiated by the Vice Chancellor, was held in the Prime Minister's office in the city on January 14, 1957, a public holiday.

The Prime Minister began "Let me at the outset deal with a matter which has concerned the Council, before going on to details -the role of Tamil in the University."

He spotted a copy of Hansard which I had placed on the top

of my papers. He turned to me and asked, "Does that copy of Hansard contain my speech?" When I replied, "yes", he asked me to read the introduction:

"The introduction clearly said that the Bill would apply to administration only, and would not affect the language of education."

Space prevents me from detailing the rest of the meeting. But, I will say that Prime Minister Bandaranaike brilliantly summed up in five sentences or short paragraphs the steps the University had to take. They were similar to the five resolutions I had earlier proposed at the University Senate. I formed an admiration for the ability of the Prime Minister.

Forty years later, when I look back at the events, I am reminded at how the determined leadership of the Prime Minister thwarted attempts by the University Council to discriminate against Tamil.

The debate in the Council and the advance information about the meeting with the Prime Minister led to interviews with the *Times of Ceylon* newspaper. There were photographs of Mr. Dudley Senanayake and Sir Nicholas Attygalle on one side insisting on Sinhala only, and Senator Azeez and myself standing up for Sinhala and Tamil. After the story was published, a Buddhist dig-nitary commented, "Eliezer is trying to destroy the Sinhalese!"

Another incident, which may not have been related to the above, took place in the Maths department. Honours students became close friends with the staff as we worked closely in our specialised field of study. They knew they could walk into our offices if they had a problem. A student, now a Professor of Mathematics, said to me, "Sir I was very shocked last night when

[My father asked me, 'Is it true that the Tamil professor is cruel to all Sinhalese students?' The son had told his father that the Professor and his staff treated all students as though they were their own children. **So the father then said, "What are all the Sinhala papers going on about then?"**]

IV. UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE AND STANDARDISATION

[The establishment of the Ceylon University College in 1921 in Colombo, and affiliated to the University of London, was a landmark in the history of education in Ceylon. It prepared students for the external degrees of B.A and B.Sc of the University of London.

Admission to the University College was based on the performance of the students in the Cambridge Senior or London Matriculation examinations. In those days there was no distinction between Tamil and Sinhalese students. Admission was on merit alone, and competition was not very keen in the early days.

[The notion of a university was not foreign to the Tamil community of Ceylon, particularly to students from the Tamil capital of Jaffna in the North. As early as 1823, American missionaries had set up the Batticotta Seminary there. It created what Bishop Kulendran proudly described as "A tremendous intellectual upsurge, the like of which has never been seen in the country before or after." The eminent British historian Sir Emerson Tennent judged the Seminary equal in rank with many an European university.]

[It produced some internationally renowned scholars, the most acclaimed being C.W. Thamotharampillai, High Court judge in Madras and Regent in the Indian state of Puthokotai in 1892.] Sadly, the Seminary closed after a few decades when the Mission

Board could not find funds for its continuation.

When the University College was founded in Colombo in 1921 by the British, it was expected it would become a University in a few years. It took twenty. During that time, competition for places got keener. The two-year HSC classes were introduced, with the University taking responsibility for conducting the HSC examinations and basing on its results admission into the University. Despite more Universities being created, they could not cope with a greater demand for places.

[Tamil students took many places, especially in Science, Medicine and Engineering. They came from a tradition of learning, serviced by first rate schools set up by various religious missions and boards. Not surprisingly, those from the Jaffna peninsula (which had a high concentration of population) were greater in proportion to its geographical size.]

The Tamil students received two serious blows. The Sinhala Only act of 1956 made it difficult for them to secure employment. A policy of standardisation made it much more difficult to get admission to a university. In the original form in 1971, discrimination was on the basis of language and the region the student came from. The system that has prevailed since 1977 is as follows: 30% are filled on island-wide merit; 55% by allocation to revenue districts in proportion to their population, and filled within each district on merit; 15% are given to districts deemed educationally underprivileged. How this operated against Tamil students can be seen from the following quotation (Ref 6):

“Students in the North (almost certainly Tamils) and those in Colombo (two thirds Sinhalese and one-third Tamil) continue to suffer serious discrimination. In 1983/4, 530 students who had the necessary grades for admission

to the Faculties of Medicine, Science and Engineering were excluded, to accommodate 519 who had lesser marks. Of the excluded students, over 50% were Tamils."

Such discrimination contradicts U.N. policy. Article 26.1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

└ **"Every one has the right to education - higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit."**┐

Similar provisions are contained in the Covenant On Civil And Political Rights, and the Covenant on Economic, Social And Cultural Rights.

└ **Article 2 (2) of the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination permits "Affirmative Action" under certain circumstances where a disadvantaged minority group may be helped. Such action, however, shall not be continued after the objectives have been achieved.**┐

Those who support standardisation in modern day Sri Lanka argue it was introduced to correct past inequalities and to bring about a balance. Clearly, this process of "balancing" has gone too far and must be terminated.

I end this section by quoting from the report by the International Commission of Jurists in 1981:

└ *"The Government should re-examine its policies on university admission with a view to basing admissions on merit rather than on racial grounds. Tamil and Sinhalese young people alike will then have equal rights to university education on the basis of capacity rather than on race. One of the*

major points of tension among Tamil youth has been the implicit racial quota imposed under present university admission policies which have barred many competent persons from pursuing higher education. "]

V. EDUCATION OF TAMILS IN ESTATES

I make a brief note on this subject. The Tamil workers in the tea estates are a very under-privileged community. They are descended from those brought from India by the British in the 19th century to work in the upcountry plantations. They are often referred to as 'Indian Tamils', to distinguish them from the Sri Lankan Tamils who have lived in the North and East of the island for thousands of years.

Through their labour, they have contributed enormously to national income. But they are severely depressed in matters of housing, health and education. Their position became worse after they were deprived of their citizenship (despite many having been born in Ceylon) by the Ceylon Citizenship Act of 1948, and of their franchise by the Ceylon (Parliamentary Elections) Amendment Act of 1949.

In the 1981 census, they constituted 5.8% of the population. They had earlier formed a much higher percentage, but many were forcibly repatriated to India. With more acquiring citizenship, they have the means to have their presence felt.

In the early years, the 'Indian Tamils' were educated in estate schools, founded and run by the Tamil Church Mission (TCM) with financial support from the British estate superintendents and Ceylonese Christians in the upcountry and maritime provinces. But with the changing political situation in the estates, and shrinking funds, the TCM has ceased to function and the schools have come under the responsibility of the Government.

These schools have a long way to go before they enjoy the quality of education enjoyed by the rest of the country.

VI. EMPLOYMENT

The Sinhala Only Act and the standardisation for university admission brought a serious reduction of employment opportunities for Tamils. The quotation below reflects the trend (Ref 6):

“The discrimination has been serious and progressive. For example, the unemployment rate (1980) among educated Sinhalese youths was 29% and among the Tamils 41%. Between 1977 and 1981, 9,965 vacancies in the Government clerical services (the forte of the Tamils) were filled by 9,326 (93.6%) Sinhalese and only 492 (4.9%) Tamil.”]

The statement is made that Tamils got preference in employment during British rule. This is not so. The British recruited people to help in administration through public examinations, using index numbers. Examiners therefore were not aware whether the candidate was a Sinhalese or Tamil. The Tamils had educational advantages which they used in securing employment.

That the so-called "balancing" through discrimination has gone too far is proven in 1984 statistics by a committee set up by the Sri Lankan Parliament. The percentage of Sinhalese in university populations, in recruitment to the work force, and in the total work force already exceeded the population figure of 75%. It is time that a more equitable system was devised. It is ludicrous that this generation of Tamil students should be penalised because their parents and grandparents did well in their day.

VII. THE BURNING OF THE JAFFNA LIBRARY

Writing about past discriminations has been a depressing experience for me. The most shattering of all to a highly literate people as the Tamils was on the night of June 1, 1981, when the Jaffna Public Library was burned down by members of the predominantly Sinhalese police force. About 100,000 priceless works-most of them irreplaceable - went up in flames. For Tamils, it was an act of destruction comparable to the Arabs' torching of the great library of Alexandria.

What greater act of discrimination against Tamils in education can there be? It cut the heart strings to the records of an ancient past. It denied access to valuable educational resources, not only to the thousands of school children who used the Library daily, but also to international scholars of Tamil research. }

The architectural splendour of the building had been a source of pride for the people of the North, as much as for the passion with which its planner and his assistants built up such a magnificent collection.

The building has been left an empty shell. It was pleasing that the city fathers speedily arranged alternate housing for the children's section and for the periodical and newspaper sections.

The act of conflagration also blurred the line for Tamils in the police force, as custodians of law and order and arsonists! No doubt they had been directed by higher officials. Watching the building burn from the Government rest house across the road, were two Government Ministers, Gamini Dissanaike and Cyril Matthew, supposedly in Jaffna to oversee the district council elections.)

Let us hope that another library will soon be built, and may it be what a great library should be. According to Mr. Nesiah (Ref 7):

└ "A city's public library is the eye of the city by which the citizens are able to behold the realness of their heritage, and behold the still greater greatness of their future. ")

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SINHALESE-TAMIL RELATIONS AND THE POLITICS OF SPACE

Professor Chelvadurai Manogaran

Territory or space is used by ethnic groups as a symbol of group identity in their struggle for the right of self-determination in many parts of the world.¹ Similarly, Sri Lankan Tamils link their identity to a well-defined geographical region comprising the Northern and Eastern Provinces of the island. Without a territory of their own, Sri Lankan Tamils could not have preserved their language, religion, and culture and continued to use Tamil names for places in their traditional homeland as they have done from the glorious days of the Tamil Kingdom. This traditional Tamil homeland has provided a safe haven for thousands of Tamils who fled Sinhalese areas during the dreadful years when recurring anti-Tamil riots rocked the island. Tamils have no longer to fear the threat of repeated killings from marauding thugs in Sinhalese areas, but have to protect themselves from the brutal methods used by government forces to occupy the Tamil homeland itself. While the Jaffna Peninsula, with its barren landscape, does not protect civilians from artillery attacks and aerial bombings, the sparsely inhabited and forested terrain of the mainland will continue to furnish protection to longtime residents, militants and thousands of refugees from these savage attacks. Unfortunately, large tracts of forested land and valuable farmlands, with their standing crops, in the Tamil homeland are being systematically destroyed by the advancing army manned exclusively by Sinhalese soldiers.

¹ David Hoosan(ed.), *Geography and National Identity*, Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1994. This excellent book shows how "geography and identity are intricately tied up," p. 1

The bitterly fought civil war between government forces and Tamil militants can be attributed to the refusal of Sinhalese leaders to accept the concept of a Tamil homeland on grounds that Sri Lankan Tamils are not the original settlers of the island and have never occupied any part of the island, exclusively for themselves.

SRI LANKAN TAMIL HOMELAND:

BOUNDARY DEMARCATED BY BRITAIN IN 1873

Sri Lankan Tamils have been unfairly chastised for defending their ethnic and territorial rights on the island, because British travellers and administrators have attested to the existence of two nations on the island in the seventeenth century. Sinhalese and Tamil place-names were even used in a map of Ceylon prepared by Arrowsmith of Britain to show the location of Sinhalese and Tamil villages on the island in the mid-nineteenth century (see Figure 1). Indeed, the areas occupied by Sinhalese and Tamils were distinct enough for the British government to utilize the distribution of Sinhalese and Tamil place-names as the basis to demarcate the boundaries of the Tamil provinces in 1873. It should be also noted that, according to the 1881 Census of Ceylon, the Sinhalese population, which was confined to the borders of the Tamil provinces, accounted for only 1.8% of the total population of the combined Tamil provinces.

Portuguese and Dutch rulers, who occupied the island prior to the British, recognized the existence of two distinct nations on the island and administered the Tamil areas as separate districts, distinct from the rest of the island in the 16th and 17th centuries. The British, on the other hand, established a unitary state, but the centralized system of government failed to unite the Tamil and Sinhalese communities. The distinct languages and historical experiences of the two nations continue to keep them apart.

TAMIL NATION: BRITAIN USES THE
CONCEPT OF TAMIL HOMELAND
TO ESTABLISH TWO TAMIL PROVINCES
IN 1873

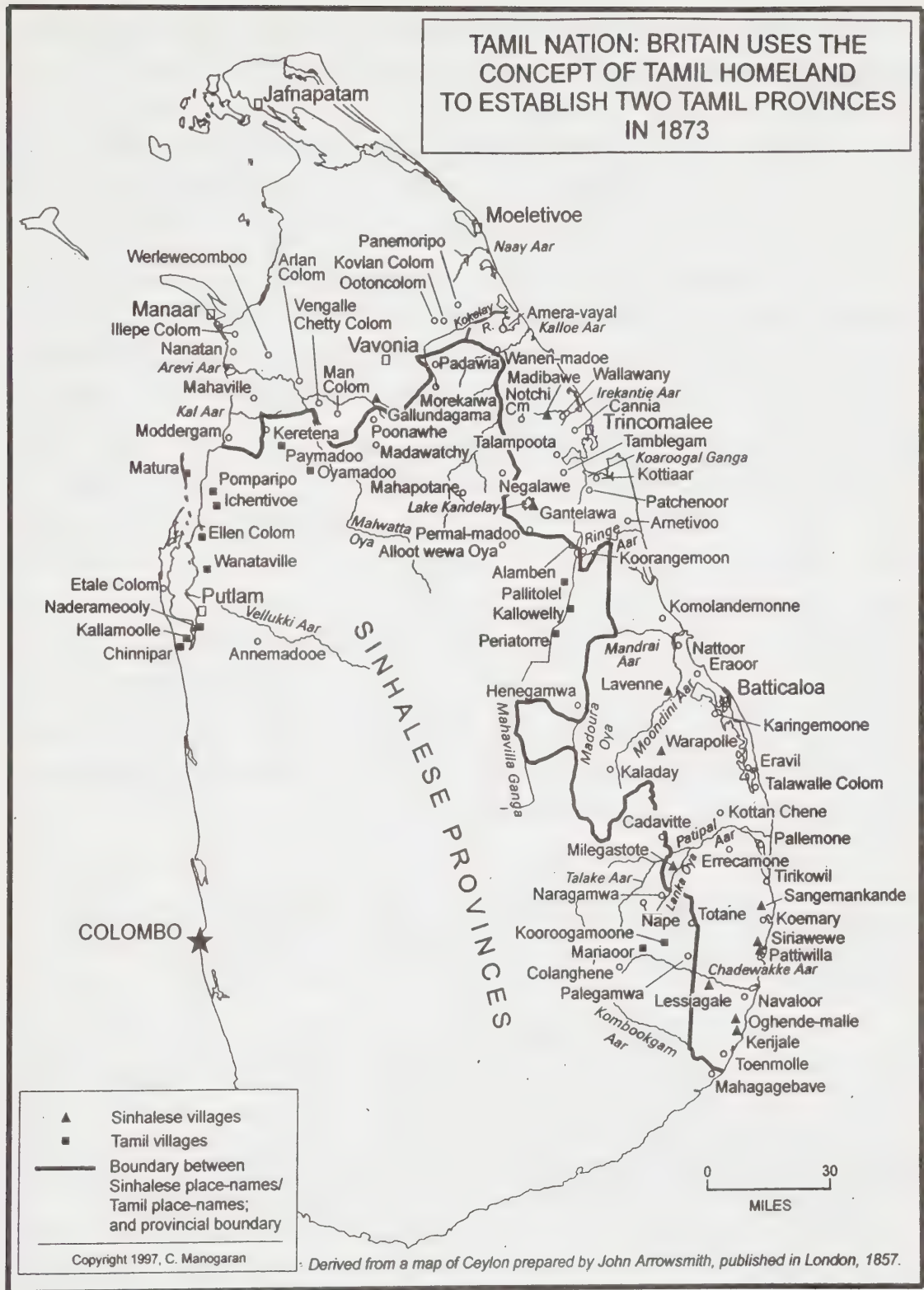


Figure 1. The space-related identity of Sri Lankan Tamils. Source: Tennent J. Emerson, *Ceylon*, Volume II, London: Longmans Press, 1859.

THE GENESIS OF THE CONCEPT OF SRI LANKAN TAMIL HOMELAND

Sri Lankan Tamils did not contemplate the notion of a Tamil homeland until their very existence as a distinct nation was threatened by the passage of Sinhala Only legislation in 1956. It was this discriminatory legislation and government's peasant colonization policy that compelled S.J. V. Chelvanayakam, the leader of the Federal Party, to advance this concept of Tamil traditional homeland as a legitimate demand of the Tamil people. He stressed that "a people without a territory are a diaspora."² He had to instil the "concept of the traditional homeland of the Tamil people" in the minds of the people because their economic future, their cultural identity and the territorial integrity of their ancestral homeland were threatened by the well-conceived plan of the Government to settle large numbers of Sinhalese peasants in the Tamil-dominated areas. The nature and extent of Sinhalese colonization in Tamil provinces and their impact on the ethnic composition and political character of the Tamil homeland have been well documented in recent studies.³

THE INTEGRITY OF SRI LANKAN TAMIL HOMELAND THREATENED BY SINHALESE COLONIZATION

Sinhalese colonization of Tamil districts was wilfully carried out to change the ethnic and political character of Tamil areas.

2 see A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, *S. J. V. Chelvanayakam and Crisis of Sri Lankan Tamil Nationalism 1947-1977*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994, p.125.

3 see Chelvadurai Manogaran, *Ethnic Conflict and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987 and "Colonization and Politics: Political Use of Space in Sri Lanka's Ethnic Conflict," in Chelvadurai Manogaran and Brian Pfaffenberger (eds.), *Sri Lankan Tamils: Ethnicity and Identity*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1994.

It is estimated that almost a quarter of the island's population was moved from the Wet Zone to the Dry Zone between 1946 and 1971, under peasant colonization schemes. These colonization schemes altered the ethnic composition of Tamil provinces. In particular, Sinhalese population in the Trincomalee District increased from 3.8% to 33.6% of the total population between 1911 and 1981. During the same period, the Tamil population decreased from 56.8% to 33.7% in the district. In the Amparai District, Sinhalese population increased from 7.0% to 38%, while the Tamil population declined from 37.0% to 20.0% between 1911 and 1981. This rapid increase in the number of Sinhalese settlers in the Eastern Province led to the creation of the Sinhalese electorates of Seruvila and Amparai in 1976 (see Figure 2)

Since the late 1970s, Sinhalese colonies have been established in Mullaitivu and Batticaloa districts, which had hitherto been exclusively inhabited by Tamil-speaking people. In the Mullaitivu District, Manal Aru, which was initially inhabited by Tamil peasants, was transformed into a Sinhalese colony and its name was changed to the Sinhalese name Well-Oya. Similarly, the Tamil-name Thannimurippu was changed to the Sinhalese name, Janakapura. These colonists have been armed and additional protection is furnished by establishment of army camps in their vicinity. Tamil leaders believe that the location of this colony was designed to deny Tamils the right to claim any district on their island as their traditional homeland, anytime in the future, or to demand the merger of the northern and eastern provinces by virtue of the linkage that has existed between the Tamil populations of the provinces in the past. Similar plans are afloat to colonize Sinhalese settlers in the Batticaloa District under the Maduru Oya Project.

Sinhalese politicians continue to justify the policy of settling Sinhalese in Tamil districts on grounds that Sri Lankan Tamils, like Sinhalese, have been migrating to Sinhalese areas,

Sri Lanka: Sinhalese Colonization Threatens the Territorial Integrity of Tamil Homeland

Sinhalese Colonization of Tamil Districts, 1881-1981



Sinhalese Electorates Carved out of Eastern Province and Manal Aru and Maduru Oya Projects

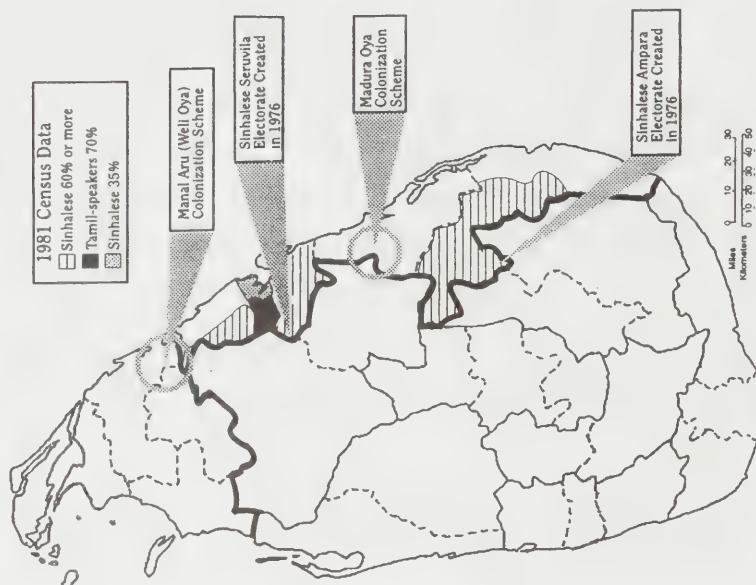


Figure 2. Sinhalese Colonization of Tamil Provinces. Source: Lee, Lionel, *Census of Ceylon, 1881*, Table IV, Colombo, 1882, Dept. of Census and Statistics, *Census of Ceylon, 1953*, Colombo, 1953 and *Census of Population and Housing, Sri Lanka, Preliminary Report No.1*, Colombo, 1981.

although Tamil migration has been voluntarily initiated and personally financed. Given the lack of resources in the Tamil-dominated dry areas of the North and East, Tamils sought residence in Sinhalese areas for the sole purpose of securing white collar jobs. Moreover, the migration of Sri Lankan Tamils into Sinhalese areas has neither changed the ethnic composition of any Sinhalese districts significantly nor created Tamil electorates in Sinhalese provinces (see Figure 3).

THE CONCEPT OF SRI LANKAN TAMIL HOMELAND ENDORSED BY SINHALESE LEADERS AND THE RECORD OF BROKEN PROMISES.

S. J. V. Chelvanayakam received the backing of his party and Tamil people to negotiate agreements with Sinhalese leaders to resolve the Tamil question. To their disappointment, the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact of 1957 and the Senanayake-Chelvanayakam Pact of 1965, which recognized Tamil as the language of a national minority and the Northern and Eastern Provinces as the traditional homeland of Sri Lankan Tamil-speaking people, were abrogated for no fault of the Tamil leaders. Tamils were, indeed, willing to accept devolution proposals which were far short of their demand for the creation of a Tamil linguistic province under a federal system of government. Sinhalese leaders not only rejected Tamil demands, but permitted successive governments to continue discriminating against Tamils in matters dealing with employment, university admissions, and allocation of resources to develop Tamil areas, while proceeding with its aggressive policy of settling Sinhalese peasants in Tamil provinces. The economic development of all areas in the Tamil provinces, except those associated with peasant colonization schemes, have been neglected since the 1960s.

Sri Lanka: Ethnic Composition of Districts

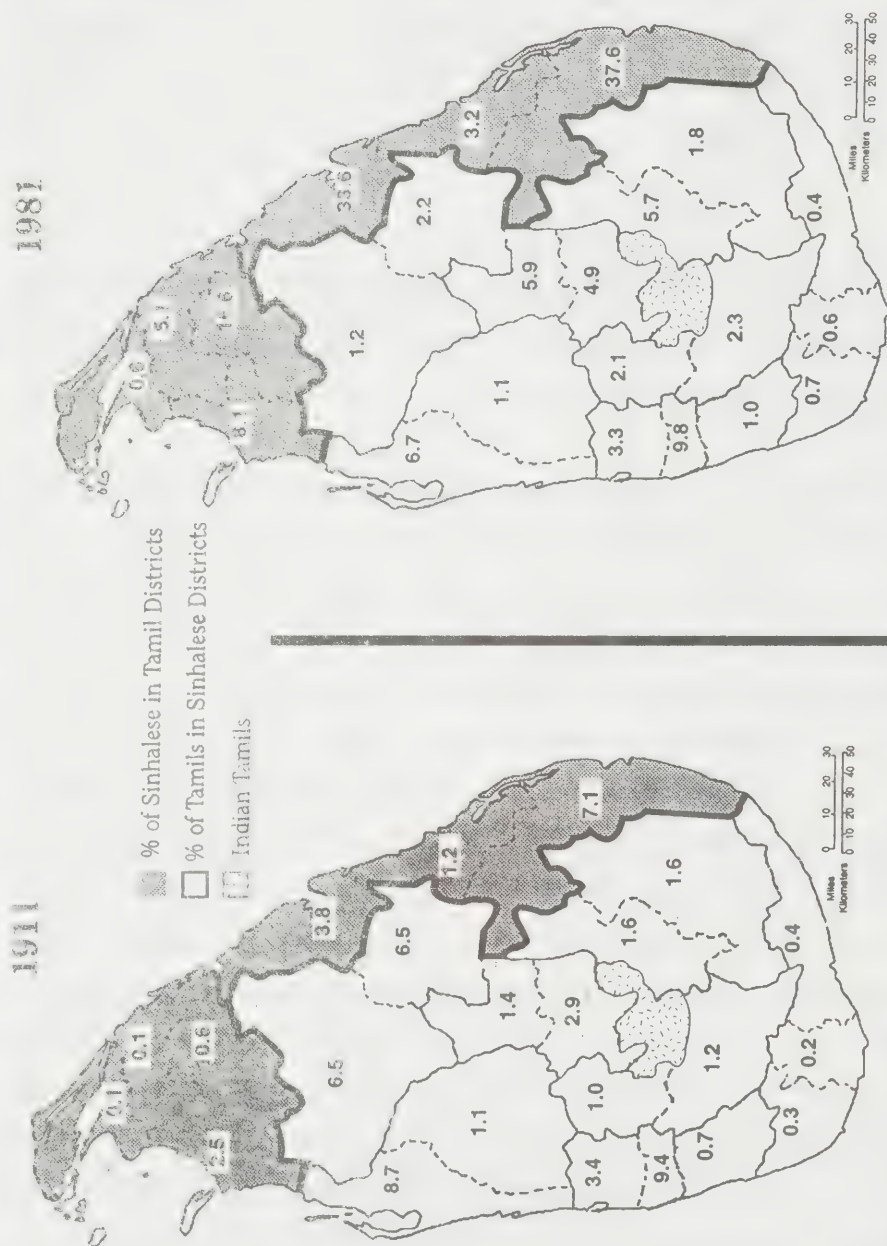


Figure 3. Changes in the Ethnic Composition of Tamil Districts, 1911-1981. Source: Denham, Ceylon at the Census of 1911, Colombo, 1912 and Department of Census and Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing, Sri Lanka, Preliminary Report No.1*, Colombo, 1981.

TAMILS VOTE OVERWHELMINGLY TO DEMAND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SEPARATE TAMIL STATE IN 1977.

Tamil youth became infuriated with the inability of ageing Tamil leaders to resolve the Tamil problem and called upon them to form a single party to fight the general election of 1977. This resulted in the formation of the Tamil United Liberation Front and the passage of the Vaddukkoddai Resolution on May 14, 1976 giving notice to Sinhalese politicians that Tamils would adopt new strategies to "establish an independent, sovereign, secular, socialist state of Eelam." The Tamil United Front won all the 14 seats in the Northern Province and 4 seats in the Eastern Province. Instead of pacifying the Tamils, Sinhalese-dominated governments persisted in introducing laws and regulations that threatened the economic survival of the Sri Lankan Tamil community and the integrity of its traditional homeland. Once it became evident that peaceful methods were ineffective in swaying the Sinhalese majority to resolve the Tamil problem, Tamil militants, including the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), resorted to violence to confront Sinhalese-dominated governments on the issue of Tamil rights.

THE CIVIL WAR AND THE FUTURE OF SRI LANKAN TAMIL HOMELAND.

The civil war between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and Government forces, which is exclusively manned by Sinhalese, is confined to the Sri Lankan Tamil Homeland. The beginnings of this war can be traced to an incident on July 23, 1983, when the LTTE killed thirteen soldiers in Jaffna. Since then the LTTE and government forces have inflicted heavy damage on each other and on the civilian population but no serious attempts have been made by either party to resolve the Tamil problem. Forty

years have lapsed since the signing of the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact, no government has yet enacted into law any of its provisions.

A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO A SEPARATE TAMIL HOMELAND:

TWO LINGUISTIC STATES WITHIN A FEDERAL UNION

Sinhalese leaders have accused Tamil leaders and the LTTE of not being willing to negotiate a peaceful settlement to the Tamil question, especially as it relates to the concept of a Sri Lankan Tamil homeland, but the government, itself, has never been willing to talk about negotiating a peaceful resolution to the conflict based on the premise of a full-fledged Federal system of government. There is documentation to show that Tamil leaders have negotiated in good faith with Sinhalese leaders in the past, but this did not benefit the Tamils. While the LTTE may be willing to abandon its demands for the creation of an independent Tamil state, Sinhalese leaders have never been willing to abandon the concept of a unitary government. Given the history of many unsuccessful negotiations, the Tamil problem has been used effectively by both the United National Party and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party to jockey for power. Even the initial proposals of President Kumaratunge's devolution package have been watered down because of the opposition from the UNP and the Buddhist clergy. Tamils cannot be blamed for the failure of peace negotiations just because Sinhalese leaders are not willing to discuss anything that approaches a full-fledged federal system of government.

FUTURE OF PEACE IN SRI LANKA.

The Tamil problem cannot be resolved as long as Sinhalese leaders refuse to recognize Sri Lankan Tamils as a distinct group, with a traditional homeland in the northeast of the island. Indeed, the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord recognized that the Northern and Eastern Provinces have been the "historical habitation of Sri Lankan Tamil-speaking people."⁴ Any meaningful proposal that will be received favourably by Tamils should deal specifically with the social and economic problems faced by the people of the Tamil provinces. Unlike Tamils, the Sinhalese people have not faced the devastating impact of discrimination or watch hopelessly as their homes, streets, schools, hospitals, farms, industries, churches and temples deteriorate and fall into disrepair or be destroyed by bombing and shelling. Therefore, devolving the same powers to both the Tamil and Sinhalese provinces is not politically satisfactory. It is imperative that the ultimate aim of devolving powers to Tamil areas should be to permit their inhabitants to participate freely and directly in the planning and reconstruction of the war-torn areas and in projects designed to alleviate their social and economic problems.

In conclusion, it is unrealistic to expect the government to resolve the Tamil question, given 50 years of broken promises to the Tamil people, unless the international community can intervene to bring Sinhalese and Tamils to the negotiating table. The government has always failed to release documents, which have been exchanged between the Tamil leaders and government officials during serious negotiations. As a result, the government is then in a position to blame the Tamils for the

⁴ Chelvadurai Manogaran, "The Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 29 July 1987," *The Round Table*, 306, 1988, pp. 195-200.

failure of negotiations. Likewise, very little information is allowed to trickle out of the war-torn areas, although they are occupied by an armed force staffed exclusively by Sinhalese personnel who do not speak Tamil or understand the needs of the ordinary Tamil people. The international community has not been able to ascertain the nature and extent to which the war has impacted on the inhabitants, many of whom have been displaced from their homes or lost their loved ones, and have no means to support themselves without substantial help from private agencies and the government. **Foreign intervention has been instrumental in bringing about peace in many parts of the world, and if the government is serious, as it claims to be, it should seek the assistance of the international community to find a political solution, to the ethnic problem.**

SETTLED OR UNSETTLED ?

The political costs of the 50-year "Colonization" (Re-settlement) Programme in the Dry Zone of Sri Lanka

Adrian Wijemanne

THE BACKGROUND

1. The mundane business of irrigation for agriculture occupies an unique and permanent place in the Sinhala psyche. The greatest secular achievements of the Sinhala nation, indeed its only lasting achievements throughout ancient and mediaeval times, were irrigation works. Far greater hydraulic systems existed in other countries of the ancient and mediaeval world but they do not seem to have imprinted themselves on the psyche of their respective nations - in China, in Egypt, in India, in Mexico, in Peru - in quite the same exclusive way perhaps because they were not the dominant elements of the secular, material achievements of those mineral-rich regions. For the Sinhala people irrigation was, seemingly, all.

2. For over a thousand years the physical habitat of the Sinhala people was the RAJARATA - "The Kingdom" - comprising the north-central province. The combination there of climate, geography and geology dictated the very special type of irrigation system that evolved there over time. The impounding of shallow bodies of water behind low earth dams, vulnerable to high evaporation and seepage losses, is a system that is economically unre-

warding especially for a crop such as rice which requires large supplies of water. Rice is a crop whose natural and economic habitat is the broad alluvial flood plains of the world's great river systems such as the Huang-ho, Yangtze and Ho Chiang in China, the Indus valley in Pakistan, the Ganges - Brahmaputra basin in the east of India, in the deltaic plains of the Nile, the Irrawaddy, the Euphrates/Tigris system and the Mekong in Cambodia. There rice cultivation is economic, giving a high return for low, or no, investment and thus supplying the surplus value the accumulation of which laid the material foundations for great civilizations. The system of the Rajarata provided too meagre a surplus for such a flowering. It afforded little more than subsistence, but even so it was all that the Sinhala people had. Perhaps, it is that which accounts for its very special place in their psyche.

3. Under the spur of Chola invasion and occupation the slow migration of the Sinhala people to the hilly west and south of the island, with its narrow river valleys, compelled an even more uneconomic form of purely rain-fed rice cultivation. The economic base was so weakened that the newly arriving Western colonial predators had easy pickings. In the instinctive thinking of the Sinhala people deliverance from colonial bondage and a return to the broad plains of the Rajarata, where lay whatever strength they ever had, were easily linked.

4. The British colonial rulers responded to this yearning for the restoration of ancient irrigation works in the Rajarata, in the early years of this century when plantation agriculture in the central hills had begun producing its surplus. Starting with small village tanks they soon graduated into more ambitious projects. They were encouraged in this direction by the growing availability of state land (then called "Crown land") in the dry zone on account of the operation there of the Land Settlement Ordinance which gave the state title to unutilized land. Soon the colonial government

was investing in expensive, capital intensive irrigation systems which added value to state land. How best to deal with such lands became a matter of much concern. To resolve the issues and evolve a stable policy the British colonial government appointed in 1930 a Royal Commission on Land. It was a step of seminal importance

THE COLONIZATION (RESETTLEMENT) SYSTEM

5. The Land Commission recommended a socio-economic policy coupled to an unique legal framework. The newly-irrigated lands were to be used to assuage the problem of landlessness; in order to serve as large a number as possible the land was to be parcelled out into small-holdings; the small-holding was to comprise two parcels - first, 5 acres (later reduced to 2 acres) of irrigated land and, secondly, 1 acre of unirrigable highland on which the state would construct a basic house and a latrine. As these allotments were to be given to the poorest of the poor there was no question of recovering from them the capital costs of the land improvements effected. Consequently the state's large investment would continue to be locked up in these allotments permanently. To deal with this situation a new and unique legal title to the land was created under the Land Development Ordinance of 1937. It was a lease in perpetuity, at a nominal annual lease rent. On the death of the lessee succession was restricted to one single nominated successor in order to prevent the fragmentation of the allotment by operation of the normal inheritance law of equal division among all the heirs. The system was unique and in many ways undoubtedly benevolent. It was, however, bureaucratic and worse still, represented the intrusion of bureaucrats into a vital area of the economy - agriculture. In order to administer the system a new, high-prestige, department of government was created, the Land Commissioner's department, headed up from the beginning by one of the ablest members of the then Ceylon Civil Service.

6. By this time the State Council was in existence and with it came the Executive Committee system of government. The Executive Committee of Agriculture and Lands was headed by D.S. Senanayake who was destined to become the first Prime Minister after independence. It was a Committee of "go-getters", hell bent upon putting the new system into immediate effect and on as wide a scale as budgetary resources permitted. However, the Committee as well as the bureaucrats who carried out the Committee's policy were both woefully lacking in economic acumen. With hindsight it is now clear as daylight to us what a disastrous policy it was but not even the leading academic economists of that day expressed the slightest unease. I am as guilty as anyone else; perhaps, even more than most for I served for many years in both the Irrigation and Land Commissioner's departments.

7. The system was an extremely capital - intensive system of agriculture implemented through subsistence farming which provided little for the market. The new legal title of perpetual leasehold removed at a stroke the possibility of commercial bank credit which could have spurred productivity and it tied the system to inadequate state-provided credit, subject to severe budgetary restraints and crippled by bureaucratic controls. In the absence of prompt, adequate and technically-supported credit the low possibilities of subsistence agriculture were reduced still further. The new legal title eliminated the possibility of the amalgamation of the small-holdings into larger units by the normal market processes of sale and purchase. Indeed, the entire system was outside the market system of the real world and established in a bureaucratic limbo of its own. In effect it was a non-commercial, bureaucratic form of capital investment under permanent state control and direction. It is little wonder that it soon became a ready-made instrument for political predators who were beginning to emerge on the political landscape.

8. The title Major Colonization Scheme was the one given to the irrigated settlement schemes in the dry zone. Their establishment commenced in the last years of British colonial rule with the Kalawewa Scheme in the Anuradhapura District and the Minneriya Scheme in the Polonnaruwa District and Kantalai and Allai in the Trincomalee District. In the next two decades over 50 such schemes were established mostly in the north-east province. The final stage was the large multi - purpose schemes epitomised by the Mahaweli Scheme which had a significant hydro-power component but where the agricultural settlement systems fell largely within the north-east province.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9. The settlement of landless Sinhala peasants in these schemes was based not on compulsion but on voluntary choice. So a socio-economic rationale had to be presented to them to induce them to move voluntarily to an unknown and distant area of which they knew nothing. The lure of irrigated land, a free house and communal facilities such as schools, dispensaries etc., coupled to a nominal lease rent was held out to landless people in crowded Sinhala villages. **No mention was made that most of the lands in question were in Tamil occupied areas with an wholly Tamil surrounding population.** The landless Sinhala villagers to whom this offer was made had never been to the areas in question and knew little or nothing about conditions there. They accepted the offer and went trustingly as wards of the state to enjoy (hopefully) the bounty that the state would provide. The publicly declared policy of the state in pushing the system was to alleviate landlessness, increase food production and provide a steady livelihood to unemployed or casually-employed people. These rosy visions were soon exposed as unrealistic dreams entirely beyond fulfilment. Far from alleviating landlessness the system merely moved it from one location to another for since the allotment could

go only to one nominated successor the rest of the family became landless agricultural workers just as they had been back home. The hoped-for increase in food production was on a scale wholly incommensurate to the enormous capital invested and the seasonal, low-intensity employment pattern of rice cultivation persisted in the new areas as in the old but with even less opportunities for casual employment in non-agricultural jobs than in the old village areas and urban centres.

ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

10. It is in the economic sphere, however, that the effects of the system were truly devastating. The massive economic implications of embarking on such an horrendously capital-intensive form of subsistence agriculture were all-pervasive especially as this was the chief economic policy of the state in the first 30 years since independence. It diverted urgently needed capital investment away from all other areas of the economy, especially from the public utilities on which broad-based economic growth financed by private capital depends. The state launched into a massive low-return, highly uneconomic capital investment programme and persisted in it for no less than 3 decades and in so doing crippled the normal growth of the economy. It is no surprise that Sri Lanka now has a g.n.p. per capita per annum of US \$ 660- whereas The Republic of Singapore is at US \$ 26,400- (page 63 of *ASIAWEEK* issue of April 18th '97) both having started from the same point in 1948. The human cost of this Himalayan folly has ravaged Sinhala society twice over at a cost in the lives of idealistic young men and women that few other nations have borne.

ETHNIC SUBVERSION

11. It is in this context of low growth and rapidly deteriorating public utilities and services (education, health, transport,

electricity supply, roads, drinking water supply, sewerage systems etc,) that the ethnic time bomb was set. The colonization schemes did provide a relatively small number of allotments for the landless Tamil population of the north-east province and then only in schemes falling within that province. Far the greater number, however, was reserved for Sinhala colonists from the 7 mainly Sinhala-occupied provinces. The movement of settlers was overwhelmingly one-directional, from Sinhala areas to Tamil areas. Into the large Major Colonization Schemes in the Sinhala-occupied provinces - Parakrama Samudra and Kaudulla in the Polonnaruwa District, Rajangana in the Anuradhapura District, Kandalama in the Matale District, Lunuganwehera in the Hambantota District and many others - no Tamil colonists were introduced. The message was clear- **colonization was a one-way street and the eventual result would be total ethnic transformation of the north-east province in such a way that the majority Tamil population there would ultimately become a minority there in exactly the same way as the Tamil people already living in the 7 Sinhala-occupied provinces were. For the Tamil majority population of the north-east province the writing was on the wall for all to see.**

12. The rising tide of ethnic change in the northeast province is well documented. In the 50 years from 1921 to 1971 a dramatic change took place in the ethnic composition of the Trincomalee and Batticaloa Districts. Michael Roberts gives the following figures at page 75 of his book, "COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES, NATIONALISMS AND PROTEST IN MODERN SRI LANKA" Colombo '79 in percentage terms:-

TRINCOMALEE

BATTICALOA

	Sinh	Tam	Mus	Oth	Sinh	Tam	Mus	Oth
1921	3.0	55.2	38.1	3.5	4.5	53.3	39.7	2.3
1946	20.6	44.5	30.5	3.7	5.9	50.3	42.2	1.6
1971	28.8	38.2	32.0	1.0	17.7	46.4	35.1	0.6

The ordinary man or woman is not a statistical barometer but is hyper sensitive to ethnic change, especially one wrought by a distant government to which the psychological preparation of the human beings who would witness and be affected by these changes was furthest from its mind. Thus came about the causal nexus between the colonization programme in the north-east province and the rise of Tamil ethnic nationalism. Ethnic nationalism, we now know, is the fiercest form of nationalism and one which cannot be wished away.

THE RISE OF TAMIL NATIONALISM

13. As the 20th century draws to a close we witness the irresistible and irreversible globalization of the world's economy. The already rapid rate of this movement will undoubtedly accelerate almost from day to day. However, overwhelming as it is it has not obliterated a seemingly contradictory force - the struggle of nations to preserve or assert their individuality. A floodtide of national identities is arising all over the world, in rich and poor regions alike. In the recent general election in Britain the Scottish National Party, asking for a separate Scottish parliament, envisaged it as "a sovereign parliament for a sovereign people", In other countries and other continents the emergence of nationalism is fraught with the direst possibilities for the peace of the world, largely due to the failure to understand nationalism and to develop

a rational, humane, constructive accommodation with it. Indeed, it may not be too far-fetched to say that the principal item on the agenda of humanity in the 21st century is how to reconcile these two seemingly divergent but equally strong movements - economic globalization and nationalism, especially ethnic nationalism.

14. A proper understanding of nationalism has been bedevilled by the popularity and seductive power of internationalist ideologies such as Marxist communism which emerged in the middle of the last century. They dominated the world stage when their theory was translated into practice in two of the world's largest countries, the Soviet Union and China. The former even enjoyed a brief flowering as a "super-power". It was "internationalism" that was on the lips of the avant garde the world over in the first decades of this century. It was but a brief ephemeral supremacy. Nevertheless, it is this longing for an all-embracing, all-explaining world theory which makes it so difficult for its erstwhile adherents to understand the current phenomenon of nationalism. It is this difficulty of understanding which inhibits a rational, peaceful accommodation with nationalism and which has led the two nations on the island of Sri Lanka to war and ruin.

15. Nationalism itself has evolved over time. More recently it has been subjected to semantic subversion. Both have contributed to the prevailing confusion. In its earliest stirring in Sri Lanka in colonial times it took the form of a subject's struggle for freedom from imperial rule. Sinhala and Tamil "patriots" struggled jointly for independence. Nationalism then was the search for freedom from rule by distant foreigners and the re-assertion of cultural equality with those who arrogantly presumed to know what was best for "the natives".

With the arrival of independence nationalism began to change. It passed from the political to the psychological domain.

Nationalism of a more authentic kind, which was instinctive and based on ethnic and cultural individuality began to emerge in both Sinhala and Tamil nations. These feelings were heightened by the fact that each of these peoples lived in a separate (even though adjacent) area of domicile in which each constituted the majority. Furthermore the overwhelming majority of each ethnic group knew little or nothing of the other's area of domicile and how the other "lived and moved and had its being".

Independent Identity
[An attempt is now being made to overlay these manifest realities by a semantic nationalism intended to subvert the existential nationalism of the real world. This is the current attempt to propagate the myth of a trans-national nationalism by asserting the existence of a single Sri Lankan nation upon the island. It is to that nation that allegiance is demanded. But is it a living, felt reality? *What is the language of the Sri Lankan nation? What is its culture? What is its religion or distinctive morality? There are no answers to these questions because the assertion which is questioned does not exist in the realm of reality.* What exists in the realm of reality are two vibrant nations, each fully equipped with all the trappings of national identity - a separate ethnic composition, a separate territory of domicile, a separate language and alphabet and script, a separate culture, a separate religion, a separate system of personal law and a separate world view. In addition there is a minuscule middle class English culture, the exponents of which are mostly air-borne citizens of the world preparing busily for exodus to greener pastures at the earliest opportunity.]

Independent Identity
[**The Sri Lankan nation is a myth concocted by the state to justify and perpetuate its own hegemony over two very real nations which are being driven further and further apart by the refusal to recognize their independent existence.**]

16. These fast disengaging nations were sundered by a variety of factors without a single counter-vailing force. The colonization programme's ethnic threat brought into sharp focus the "home-land" consciousness. In a threat-free atmosphere one's home is taken for granted, identified by postal address. When forcible intrusion threatens, however, a home is converted into a fortress defended with one's life. That is the element of desperate determination which the colonization programme contributed to Tamil nationalism. The military invasion of recent years, complete with "jackboot" colonization under military protection, re-inforces Tamil nationalism's determination to resume and recover its home-land from a neighbour whose predatory intentions are seen as "red in tooth and claw".

ETHNIC MINORITIES IN A POST-WAR FUTURE

17. What of the future? For there is always a future beyond war. Indeed, a vision of what that future might be will contribute powerfully to the attainment of peace. History shows many instances of ethnic change caused by superior external force. The maritime empires - Spanish, British, French, Portugese and Dutch - altered the ethnic composition of North and South America and Australia. The land-based continental empires - Mughal and Russian - had equally profound effects on the Indian sub-continent and Central Asia respectively. The interesting difference between the two is that while the maritime empires totally subverted and transformed the ethnic composition of North and South America and Australia, leaving overwhelming white European majorities in those continents, the landbased continental empires failed to do so and left behind them , at their expiry, only minorities in the countries which they siezed and ruled and colonized. The Mughal empire in the Indian sub-continent left behind a relatively small ethnic (Central Asian) minority and a numerically larger religious minority of local converts to Islam. The Russian empire - both

Tsarist and Soviet - left Russian ethnic minorities of varying size in their Baltic, Caucasian, Central Asian and East Asian colonial republics. Kazakhstan has the largest Russian population, but still a minority.

Roman Empire L 18. The historical record has been just the same with even earlier continental imperialisms. The longest-lasting and most firmly-rooted empire of all, the Roman empire, left few Romans behind and had hardly any ethnic effect. The Norman conquest of England did not alter the existing ethnic balance in any significant way. The Austro Hungarian and Ottoman empires left only small, scattered, German and Turkish settlements in their wake. The historic inhabitants of an homeland have always held their ground and have not been eradicated or swamped. It is the same phenomenon that is manifesting itself in so many theatres of ethnic conflict today - Palestine, the Southern Sudan, Assam, Tibet and, not least, the emergent state of Thamil Eelam.

19. However, it is equally the lesson of history that the ethnic intrusions caused by empires and pseudo-empires have proved irreversible. Imperial efforts leave behind them permanent minorities. The departure of the imperial patron has not been followed by genocide or ethnic cleansing. The imperial implant is not rejected by the body politic but is accommodated within it even if not fully assimilated. The Tamil plantation worker population, implanted by the British in the very heartland of Sinhala society, is there to stay. The 39-year long effort to dislodge them (1948 to 1987) proved conclusively both its futility and its absurdity. In the long years ahead, in what the French historians call "le longue duree" of history, it is a minority that will unquestionably play a vital role in modernizing and transforming both Sinhala society and the Sinhala state.

20. Minorities and their social, economic and political effects on a body politic are vital catalysts in social transformation and enlightenment. It is a silver thread that runs through human history. The immense contribution to the modernization and liberalization of Britain by both the Protestant Huguenot refugee minority from France and the long-established Jewish minority are now universally acknowledged. Our daily diet of TV shows already the significant contribution the Asian minority is making to British life. It holds an enormous potential for the future of this country. No other European country has such an asset today - it is an asset that will yield riches that greatly surpass all the oil wealth of the North Sea. }

21. Unhappily the majority of mankind is unblessed with the French historians' **le longue duree** of history. Ethnic minorities and the external changes that produced them are easily misunderstood. All too often they are the by-products of war and oppression and so stick in the nationalists gullet. But the bitterness and pain of war are like the pain of childbirth - unpleasant and intense but soon forgotten. Forgotten because a new birth brings a new busy-ness, new demands, new efforts. New states, especially ones like Thamil Eelam with a low ratio of people to land, need every man jack's contribution in the immediate present. It is pragmatism rather than altruism that will dictate enlightened minority policies in a new state and generate a reciprocal response within its new, and chastened, neighbour.

22. I am going to end this address with a little hypothetical play with history - it is a liberty that students of history should permit themselves more often - and I invite you all to join me in this play.

Let us go back to the year 1948, the year of independence. Let us suppose that in that year there were living in the state of

Tamilnadu 1 million Sinhala people, men, women and children, who had been settled there by the British. The new state of Ceylon has a real and justifiable interest in their welfare and happiness and prosperity. In that context would the new state of Ceylon have tried to embark on the dis-enfranchisement and deportation of the Tamil plantation worker population? Or taken any of the other steps, both legislative and administrative, which discriminated against the Tamil population, every one of which could have been reciprocally inflicted upon the 1 million Sinhala minority by the state of Tamilnadu? I am convinced it would not have done so. On the contrary it would have adopted the most enlightened policies towards its Tamil minority in the hope that the state of Tamilnadu would treat its large Sinhala minority likewise. RECIPROCITY - do as you would be done by - is the first foundation of enlightenment even though it is rooted in pragmatism rather than in altruism. It was the absence of the 1 million Sinhala people in the state of Tamilnadu that enabled the follies we now bemoan to be perpetrated.

23. My little play with history is over. There is great ground for optimism in it. The future states of Sri Lanka and Thamil Eelam will contain significant minorities of each in the other - one the product of enterprise and initiative, the other the product of colonization. The existence of these minorities will dictate courses to each state which will be their salvation in **le longue duree** of history.

FIFTY YEARS OF NATIONAL DISASTER

Professor A Jeyaratnam Wilson

I am most grateful to the organisers of this luncheon and in particular to my good friend Mr. Jeyam Thamotheram for presenting me with this opportunity to address you on the subject, Fifty Disastrous Years. Let me straightaway tell you that the title of my talk today does not in any way seek to narrate to you the half century of hell, death, doom and disaster through which our brothers and sisters in Jaffna and Batticaloa have gone. That is a sordid tragedy in itself where we have witnessed the barbarians enter our gates and loot and plunder, kill and rape the innocents in our community much to the chagrin of all Tamil people as well as the international community. There is now talk of intervention, mediation and arbitration. Alas! all this seems a little late. We do not know and we cannot predict the future. Tamil nationalism has come to stay and has appeared on the scene as a reactivated and burgeoning force. The scars of the horrendous war that the Sinhala Buddhist state has waged against us will remain a festering sore.

Before I interpret to you the events of 1947 to 1997, there are two burning questions to which I will try to find answers. Firstly, is the continuing Sinhala-Tamil conflict a failure of political will on the part of the Sinhala politicalised class to implement the solemn undertakings of their leadership? Secondly, were we witnesses to the ugly face of Sinhala nationalism? In other words, a surge to political hegemonism by the Sinhala political elite who had suddenly been blessed with the bonanza of sovereign independence with no checks or balances attached to the conditions of the transfer of power by Britain in 1948?.

To our first question, it is now almost universally admitted that the Sinhala politicalised class sought an explanation to the woes and grievances of their less fortunate country men. In this way, this class hoped to avoid the wrath of the barbarians by pointing to a scapegoat ready at hand, namely, the Tamils. The Citizenship Acts were a surrender by the low country degenerates to upcountry upstarts. Thus the Sinhala Only Act of 1956 was designed to give hope to the ascendant unemployable GCE 'O' level Sinhala candidates and unemployed graduates.

On the second question of the surge to political hegemonism, though this is an accurate assessment, there were many more sophisticated ways of giving expression to it than by the naked use of force by the Sinhala state. For example, the Citizenship Acts of 1948 and 1949 relating to the disfranchisement of Indian plantation workers could have been more humanely enforced than erasing one half and more of their numbers from the electoral register. It is very unfortunate that Britain chose this path as the easy way out by granting unconditional independence. Now 50 years after independence, the conscience of Britain's political elite seeks to find an acceptable political solution through the good offices of Dr. Liam Fox and Mr. Malcolm Rifkind. Their endeavours given the context, I daresay, have little chance of gaining acceptance.

So then we are left with only a partial explanation of the dynamics of a historical process which began supposedly some 2500 years ago. That dynamism still constitutes the locomotive of history even to this day. Some parallels in other states might give us a few hints as to the dilemma of the Sinhala national question in Sri Lanka. If we look deeper to the main springs of German history and to Nazi racialism, there was the concept of *herrenvolk*, the privileged people which mushroomed into the Nazi peril and insatiable ambition for world domination and the superiority of the

Aryan race. The same could be said of white nationalism, the Ku Klux Klan in the United States and apartheidism in South Africa. There was little difference in the brahminical attitude of India's vis-a-vis the non-brahmins. And the Bhumiputra in Malaysia is the post-modern version of this urge to create a privileged state folk. in Sri Lanka they are already speaking of Buddhaputra, the privileged Sinhala folk who enjoy the benefits of standardization, state-aided colonisation and preferential treatment in appointments and promotions in the Public Services. If you are born of Sinhala parents, you straightaway become a member of a highly privileged exclusive club. The last mentioned is exactly what happened with us Tamil folk in Sri Lanka. The Sinhala staatsvolk took the upper hand and hardly had independence settled on their laps like a gift from the gods than that half of the Tamil population was deprived of their citizenship and voting rights, in 1948 and 1949. Then in the wake of this followed the Sinhala Only Act in less than 7 years which by statute made our language a dead language and threatened the very existence of Tamil culture.

To go back a little into history, I am of the view that the Tamil disaster really began at the time of the formation of the Ceylon National Congress in the good year 1919. Prior to the convening of this Congress, Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam who was one of the founder-members of the Congress used his enormous prestige to persuade and negotiate with the principal Tamil organisations, the Jaffna Association and the Ceylon Tamil Maha Jana Sabhai and to join in the venture and participate in the work of setting up the organisation. Prior to this arrangement, Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam had entered into an agreement in December 1918 with Messrs James Peiris and E. J. Samarawickrarna, influential Sinhalese political leaders at the time to concede the Tamil demand for a Tamil seat in the Western Province if not one in Colombo town. When the matter came up for ratification before the Ceylon National Congress at its annual ses-

sions, the Working Committee of the Congress without any explanation postponed consideration of this agreement. The matter was left to die a slow death in the years thereafter. Then on 28 June 1925, the delegates of the Congress's Executive Committee led by Mr. C. E. Corea, one of the leading liberals at the time and Mr. W. Duraiswamy concluded a treaty on the distribution of seats in the entire island on a ratio of 2:1. The Agreement was referred to as the Mahendra House Agreement. These were the beginnings of the Agreements, Understandings and Pacts that came to be signed and unilaterally abrogated by the Sinhala leadership in future years. Again the Sinhala leaders were reluctant and hesitant to proceed with the implementation. Sir P. Arunachalam was deeply distressed over the failure once again of the Congress to proceed with implementing the Agreement. The excuse given by their leaders was by no means convincing. They argued that it was unfair for the natural majority (the Sinhalese) in the Island to be deprived of their due rights. They obviously saw in the demands of the Tamils a further attempt by the Tamils to have themselves recognised as one of the two founding peoples of the Island. These attempts at accommodation were as I said earlier only the incipient signs of a Sinhala unwillingness to enter into a consociational overarching understanding with their elitist Tamil counterparts. But this was never to be. **Arunachalam's residence at the time, Ponklar, and Ramanathan's Sukhasthan** were then the power houses of inter - ethnic diplomacy in Ceylon. In later years it came to be Tintagel and Horagolla, Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike's residences, and Woodlands, D. S. Senanayake's residence. During the 1920s, political activity was mainly confined to Ponklar and Sukhasthan as well as Queen's House. During this entire period, the Governor for most of the time, Sir. William Manning, a masterful negotiator, kept all the minority communities' elites and their Sinhala counterparts on their toes. It was ultimately Governor Manning's formula to prevent the Sinhala mem-

bers outvoting the combined strength of the minorities in the Legislative Council that became the basis of the Fifty Fifty demand of G. G. Ponnambalam and his All Ceylon Tamil Congress in the nineteen thirties and nineteen forties.

Towards the end of the nineteen twenties, the Governor of Ceylon at the time, the half-mad Sir Hugh Clifford, demanded of Whitehall to send to Ceylon an investigative Royal Commission to examine the workings of the Manning Constitution in operation at the time and the difficulties that public servants were experiencing at the hands of a powerful Finance Committee of the Legislative Council. The Commission was headed by the Earl of Donoughmore and it recommended a peculiarly hybrid Constitution which came to be called the Donoughmore Constitution and was operative from 1931 to 1947. The idea of the Commissioners was to train Ceylonese politicians and leaders in the art of self government.

There were two recommendations of the Donoughmore Commission which threw out of kilter the entire foundation of the Tamil political position in Ceylon. First communal representation was abolished and replaced by unadulterated territorial representation. This meant that the Tamil position on ratios in representation was completely gone, the baby had been thrown out with the bath-water. Secondly as if to hinge this recommendation on a solid foundation, universal suffrage was introduced. There could not have been a firmer guarantee for ensuring the majority rights of the Sinhalese than this double bonanza of territorial representation and universal suffrage. Thirdly a system of government by executive committees was inaugurated making it in fact possible for the election of the Pan Sinhalese Board of Homogeneous Sinhalese-speaking Ministers after the general election of 1936.

The Tamils could not have suffered a worse death blow and it was a pity that they had to await the emergence of their man of the hour, the mesmerising and magnetic G. G. Ponnambalam who was the white knight in shining armour who did the Tamil people proud in their crisis, in their most dangerous hour. It was a great tragedy that the Tamil people in their desperate plight were leaderless in the years 1931 to 1936. There was no alternative strategy they could deploy against the nascent floodtide of Sinhala communalism. *They could not have suffered a worse fate than fall prey to the whims of the Jaffna Youth Congress which committed the Himalayan blunder of successfully boycotting elections to the State Council.* As a result the Tamils lost at least one if not two places in the first Board of Ministers, 1931 to 1936. This was not a crime but far worse than a crime. It was a great criminal blunder. The sterile Tamil boycott angered the imperial rulers at Whitehall and it was quite late in the day when elections were held to the State Council.

[The rivers of Sinhala communalism as I said earlier began in full flood during this phase in Ceylon's constitutional evolution. Elections were conducted by naked appeals to caste, religion and race. It was the aperitif of pure territorial representation and universal suffrage that produced the sumptuous meal of the Pan-Sinhalese ministry of 1936. Lastly the Tamils realised that as a result of their absence from the Board of Ministers, they were being gradually edged out of the public services and losing out in the distribution of funds for the development of their areas.]

[The entire Donoughmore period from 1931 to 1947 was the seedbed of Sinhala and Tamil communalism.] It was Sinhala communalism gone mad. Elections were fought and lost on appeals to race. The constitution also gave rise to raw communal political parties of which the worst manifestation was the Sinhala Maha Sabha of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike and as a defence against it, the All Ceylon Tamil Congress of G.G.Ponnambalam. Ponnambalam, like

the boy standing on the burning deck when all but he was lost, fought a valiant battle for his demand for fifty fifty or what came to be known as balanced representation. He made a speech in the State Council expounding his creed on Minorities and Constitutional Reform in 1938, the longest speech ever made till then by a Member of the Legislature. The appointment of the Soulbury Commission was a victory for Ponnambalam but alas all Mr. Ponnambalam's Herculean efforts were to little purpose. Ponnambalam made a trip to England just before the Soulbury Report was published. He canvassed one or two British MPs, Lord Croft and Mr. Tom Driberg but they could do very little for the Tamil cause. And while Ponnambalam busied himself in Britain, his followers in the State Council, Messrs S. Natesan, Jeganathan Tyagaraja and of course Sir Arunachalam Mahadeva voted for the acceptance of the Soulbury Report along with D. S. Senanayake's supporters, thus imperilling the Tamil position in the eyes of Whitehall. **The Tamil position was that for as long as the transfer of power by Whitehall failed to receive their consent the Tamil people retained to themselves the right to self determine their future. This position though ignored by Britain has been retained by the Tamils up to this day.** In fact at every general election from 1956 to the present day the Federal party and its successor, the TULF have claimed for the Tamil people the right of self determination.]

Independence came for the Sinhalese people on 4 February 1948 by the grace and favour of the British Parliament and the ultra racist UNP were put on the saddle. D. S. Senanayake was made Prime Minister shortly after the general election of September 1947 not without the devious political engineering of the Governor at the time Sir Henry Monck Mason Moore and expert advisors such as Sir Ivor Jennings and a few Sri Lanka watchers in Whitehall like Sir Charles Jeffries.

Thereafter followed the undisguised naked exercise of power by the so-called statesman D. S. Senanayake. I have heard sage Tamils who benefited during the D. S. period claim that the old fox was a master statesman who would never have let down the Tamils. I do not for a moment believe in this myth of the "D. S. phenomenon". Had he lived, he would have done greater harm to the Tamils. Shortly after his death in March 1952, his son Dudley who succeeded his father as Prime Minister won the general election of April 1952 and it seemed as if the United National Party would be ensconced in the seats of power for the next 25 years. But the best laid plans of mice and men go awry. Dudley fell ill and resigned the premiership in October 1953 just serving over one year as Prime Minister and was succeeded by his swashbuckling cousin Sir John Kotelawala. From 1953, the Sri Lanka ship of state was in the doldrums. The Buddhist clergy and laity took on the "cross" of their language and religion bewailing that these were in danger of destruction and that all that was required to reassure a threatened people was to enact Sinhala as the only official language and Buddhism as the state religion. The Movement at the beginning was in search of a leader. Its stalwart at first offered the mantle of leadership to Dudley who was still ailing. Dudley contrary to popular myth identified himself with the aims and objectives of the Sinhala Buddhist movement but he was too ill to accept the onerous responsibilities. **It was then that the Buddhist stalwart invited S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike to take the leadership to which he readily agreed and then began the Movement which was the begetter of the present bloody civil war in the Northeast.**

The forces of Sinhala Buddhism were too ferocious and wild for Mr. Bandaranaike to hold in leash. He found to his grief that he had bitten off more than he could chew. And it was this very force which in the end did him in. In the first few months in office, Mr. Bandaranaike had to use his entire

armoury of political skills to tame and domesticate the Sinhala militants and activists. In fact on the day of the passing of the Sinhala Only Act, Mr. Bandaranaike found it impossible to put his own house in order. There began the first barbarous pogrom of the Tamils in Colombo, Panadura and Gal Oya. Law and order were in the end re-established, only after the Governor-General Sir Oliver Goonetilleke assumed the leadership of the state to which Mr. Bandaranaike readily acquiesced.

The Federal Party which had won the overwhelming confidence of the Tamil electorate at the general election of 1956 now decided on a militant course of active opposition. Their MPs who staged a sit down protest at the Galle Face green were beaten up and spat upon. There were repercussions in the Gal Oya district and in the North Central Province. It took some 3 weeks for the armed forces to bring the disturbances under control. The government had however learned its lesson. The enactment of a single act in Parliament had cost it a pretty penny besides disturbing the national equilibrium.

The riots of 1956 were only the forerunner of worse things to follow. Even after the murder and mayhem of 1958 there were few people who could ever have foreseen the emergence of the Prabhakaran factor. 1958 was followed by the massive civil disobedience campaign by the FP in the North and East in February-March 1961. The entire administration in these areas was brought to a standstill. The campaign revealed two things. The Sri Lanka army behaved like an army of occupation. Mr. Edmund Samarakoddy raised a lone voice of protest. He castigated Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike's government, deploring that the proud Tamil people were being trampled under foot by the jackboot of the Sri Lankan army. The second was that the young people of Jaffna began losing their cool. Demonstrating before the armed forces in front of them, they pulled off their shirts and dared the

army to fire at them. Nothing untoward happened fortunately. Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike in an interview to the Sunday Observer said that the satyagraha was one of the worst moments in her political life. She said she feared that her government would have to order the army to fire on the crowd in order to disperse the satyagrahis and she expected that at least 500 people would be killed, a worse fate than that which happened to the satyagrahis of Amritsar. In the end the army did not have to shoot to kill but they baton-charged the satyagrahis critically wounding several hundreds of them. From this incident of 1961, there began the upward spiral of the Tamil movement.

After the general election of March 1965, the usual anti-Tamil riots began and the newly installed Dudley government as usual took time to quell these. The period of the Dudley government, 1965-70 was one of national reconciliation though the Tamil Regulations of January 1966 was another occasion for violence. Then came the formation of the United Front in 1967 comprising the SLFP, LSSP and CP. Its success at the general election of May 1970 spelled the beginning of the end of Sinhala-Tamil amity. After the election of May 1970, there followed the usual anti-Tamil pogroms. The years 1970 to 1977 were the worst phase in Sinhala-Tamil relations. It is a crying shame that the Marxist leaders of the United Front comprising world famous Trotskyists and a suave, sophisticated Burgher gentleman in Pieter Keuneman were the willing midwives at the birth of anti-Tamilism. Among the Trotskyists, there was the shameless Dr. Colvin R. de Silva fathering the pro-Sinhala Buddhist Constitution of 1972. Pieter Keuneman sat as a member of the sectoral committee which endorsed the evil and wicked schemes of the Sinhala bureaucrats in the Department of Education with their schemes of standardization and assigning racial quotas to the Sinhala districts on the score of their being "backward and poorly equipped with schools". This

open policy of discriminating against Tamils was in fact the last straw for the Tamil people. They reacted with refurbished militancy and chose the path of the armed struggle, the Ayutha Poraddam. In 1974 all the Tamil political parties united under the banner of the Tamil United Front. Hardly two years later at Vaddukoddai in 1976 they changed their name to the Tamil United Liberation Front and then commenced the war of Tamil independence. The army began being increasingly used by the state to suppress Tamil opposition.

The general election of 1977 brought the United National party back to power. The UNP had, to start with, laudable objectives. In their manifesto, they drew attention to the appalling low levels that Sinhala -Tamil relations had deteriorated and pledged that they would summon a Round Table Conference to resolve existing disputes. However at the same time the new UNP government failed to control the savage violence of the lumpen Sinhala hoodlums against Tamils. And in fact some of the violence, it was found, was under the direct instructions of the new ministers, the government claiming innocence all the while protesting that quite a number of the recruits for the armed forces were selected from among the political supporters of the past United Front government.

1978-83 were years of unmitigated savagery launched against Tamil settlers in the seven Sinhala provinces.

Then came the holocaust of 23 July, 1983 when partially state organized violence crippled the Tamil middle class. Tamils at the economic level were left for almost 48 hours at the mercy of indifferent state security personnel. Within a few days, but longer than it usually takes, large numbers of middle class Tamils were subjected to loot, arson, plundering, rape and murder. By the time the armed forces decided to act, the largest efflux of Tamils from

Ceylon to foreign lands was in full tide. The war of independence had begun, the Tamil refugees to W. Europe and N. America quite unexpectedly set themselves up as successful people, entrepreneurs wherever they established themselves. They also became powerful lobbyists and began pressuring governments of the countries where they lived to restrict aid to Ceylon on the score that human rights were flagrantly violated. The Tamil problem had become internationalised, giving rise to increasing foreign concerns of the violation of human rights in Ceylon. The prosperous Tamil refugee community in foreign countries also reportedly became a source of funding for Mr. Prabhakaran and his followers. The events leading to India's intervention and the Accord of 29 July 1987 are too recent for me to recall.

This anti-Tamil record of successive Sri Lanka governments gave rise to what President J.R. Jayawardene in one of his despairing moments said, "they constitute the world's most powerful minority". Secondly, not only did the Tamils become a powerful minority but they also became economically successful.

You cannot keep good men down.

The record of suffering of our community is incredible. I would venture to say that in every case, with Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, President JRJ, the heads of state became prisoners of the very forces they unleashed and mobilised to start with. As bees go for the honey, they thought they could protect their power bases by letting loose on the Tamil people a vulgar and ill disciplined Sinhala army. But they failed to realise that once the bees around the honeycomb were disturbed, they would go wild and sting everyone in their wake. This is exactly what happened when hoodlums and thugs under the guise that theirs was all a manifestation of Sinhala nationalism preyed on the

innocent Tamils like vultures on a corpse. In almost every instance, the leaders surrendered to the powerful lobbies that influenced the multitude. Mr. S.W.R.D. was the virtual prisoner of the Buddhist Sangha. So were the forces supporting the Buddhist Sangha in the case of Mrs. Bandaranaike. And President JRJ though to all intents and purposes, a man of iron, was a slave to the principal Tamil-baiter in his cabinet, Mr. Cyril Mathew the equivalent of the notorious Jew-baiter Julius Streicher in Adolf Hitler's government.

The Tamil people have in the last 14 years been brutalised, had their young and old men plucked from their midst and their properties destroyed. How do we get out of this impasse? Lipjhart and Daalder with their theories on consociationalism showed way out but their solutions are too late. What about the variants of devolution, from confederation to the Chandrika proposals, for weak devolution. Much will depend on the determination of the Tamil people to fight out their destiny.

I personally think that only a confederal proposal will win the approval to the Tamil people as well as the Tiger high command. A pure federation might have its appeals. But will it have fair chance to work? There will be so much bickering that in the end both the Sinhalese and Tamils will want to get out of it. But you cannot get away after 50,000 people have lost their lives by giving the Tamil people stones when they are asking for bread.

About the authors..

C J Eliezer



Professor C J Eliezer, after a brilliant educational career at the University College, Colombo, obtained a PhD in Mathematics from the University of Cambridge. After a brief period of lectureship at the University of Ceylon he returned to London where he obtained a DSc in 1949. On his return to Ceylon he was appointed Professor of Mathematics at the University of Ceylon. He was also Dean of the Faculty of Science and for a short period a Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor.

In 1959 he held the position of Professor of Mathematics at the University of Malaya. In 1968 he was appointed the first Professor of Applied mathematics at La Trobe University, Australia. Here he served as Dean of Physical Sciences and Deputy Vice Chancellor. He retired in 1983.

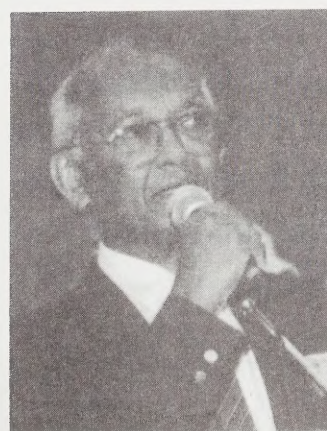
X Eliezer has authored several scientific articles and books. He has identified with the Ceylon Tamil Association of Victoria and the Australian Federation of Tamil Associations taking a keen interest in the problems of the Tamils as a Nation.

Chelvadurai Manogaran



Professor C Manogaran is Professor of Geography, University of Wisconsin-Parkside, since 1989. His speciality is in climatology and water resources and has published several research papers on irrigation/forests and the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict in North American and international journals. He is the author of the book, *Ethnic Conflict and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka*, University of Hawaii Press, 1987, which was recognized as one of Choice magazine's (published by the Association of College and Research Libraries in the US) 1988-89 Outstanding Academic Books. He has also edited (with B Pfaffenherger) *The Sri Lankan Tamils: Ethnicity and Identity*, Westview Press, USA., 1994. He brings to us his expertise to analyze the role of geographical factors in the ethnic conflict, especially as they related to Sri Lanka's policies on Land Colonization and the allocation of water for agriculture and settlement. He has been a consultant to the United States Department of State on the Sri Lankan Ethnic problem since 1988.

Adrian Wijemanne



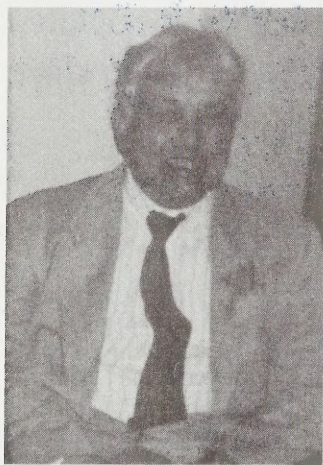
Mr Adrian Wijemanne was in the first batch of recruits to the Ceylon Civil Service after independence in 1948 and served in it for the first 14 years of his working life. He retired on the language issue in 1962. His last two posts were Assistant Director of Irrigation (1955-57) and Deputy Land Commissioner (1957-62) in direct charge of the Major Colonization

Schemes. From 1957 to 58 he functioned also as secretary of the second Land Commission, the report of which was published as Sessional Paper X of 1958.

There followed a varied career in the private sector in Sri Lanka and with the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland and in The Netherlands. He lives now in retirement in Cambridge.

He has written extensively on the conflict in Sri Lanka. His first book, **WAR AND PEACE IN POST-COLONIAL CEYLON 1948-91** was published by Orient Longman of New Delhi in August 1996 and a second book **SO, WHAT WENT WRONG?** is currently being readied for publication.

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